

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

GRANT PERIOD: 2017–2022

PARTNERSHIP AND SERVICES TO INCREASE WELL-BEING AND IMPROVE PERMANENCY OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN INDIANAPOLIS/MARION COUNTY, IN

LEAD AGENCY: Volunteers of America
(VOAOHIN)

TARGET SERVICE AREA: Marion County

LOCATION: Indianapolis, IN

**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES REGION:** 5

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT SERVED: IN-007

BRIEF PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Volunteers of America of Ohio and Indiana (VOAOHIN) and its partners, Marion County Superior Court—Juvenile Division and the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is implementing a comprehensive project to serve mothers who give birth to newborns who test positive for opioids, cocaine, or methamphetamine in Marion County, Indiana. The project is addressing (1) an absence of formal coordination mechanisms between the courts, DCS, and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment providers; (2) the rising rate of children placed in state custody due to parental substance use; and (3) a severe shortage of treatment and aftercare services for postpartum women with substance use disorders. Fresh Start Recovery Center offers comprehensive residential services for mothers and children, along with intensive case management care in residential and aftercare.

TARGET POPULATION: VOAHOIN's project is targeting postpartum women whose newborns test positive for opioids, cocaine, or methamphetamine and have an open DCS case. The project serves infants and one additional sibling, aged five and under.

PROJECTED NUMBERS SERVED: The program is serving 115 families over the course of the five-year grant. This target number was reduced from 160, due to the effects of the public health crisis in 2020.

MAJOR PROGRAM GOALS

- GOAL 1:** Improve coordination between the courts, DCS, VOAHOIN, and other service providers.
- GOAL 2:** Increase well-being, improve permanency outcomes, and enhance safety of children who are at risk of an out-of-home placement as a result of a parent's substance use.
- GOAL 3:** Increase adult recovery from substance use.
- GOAL 4:** Support family functioning and stability.
- GOAL 5:** Increase staff knowledge and skills related to treatment and recovery support.
- GOAL 6:** Increase community of practice, knowledge, and skills.

KEY PROGRAM SERVICES

- Aftercare
- Connection with Housing Supports, including Transitional Housing
- Development of formalized cross-systems policies and procedures designed to improve communication,

- identification, referrals, and service delivery
- Family-centered treatment with priority to recovery housing and treatment for families
- Family Coach aftercare services—in-home and/or via telehealth
- Intensive/Coordinated Case Management
- Look up and Hope
- Motivational Interviewing
- Nurturing Parenting Program
- Relapse Prevention (Therapy)
- Residential/In-patient Treatment—Specialized for Parents with Children
- Trauma Recovery Empowerment Model

PARTNER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Indiana Department of Child Services
- Marion County Family Court
- Evaluator—NPC Research

VOAOHIN is utilizing an outreach plan to formalize their partnerships with community-based providers serving families involved in the program.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The local evaluation of the Volunteers of America of Ohio and Indiana (VOAOHIN) Fresh Start program has an impact study and a process and collaboration study. VOAHOIN is also participating in the RPG cross-site evaluation studies of family and child outcomes, program implementation, and collaboration among RPG grantees and partners.

IMPACT STUDY DESIGN

The grantee is using a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of its RPG services for postpartum women struggling with substance use. Members of the program group are located at VOAHOIN's Fresh Start residential treatment program in Marion County (referred to below as the RPG program). In addition to receiving a bed at the Fresh Start residential treatment facility, mothers in the RPG program are working with a family advocate who is representing them in court hearings and a family coach who is providing wraparound case management services. The program consists of three phases individualized to each client's needs. During Phase 1, which lasts around 30 days, mothers are residing at the Fresh Start facility and focus on acute stabilization of withdrawal symptoms. During Phase 2, which lasts on average 55 days but can be up to six months, mothers are continuing to reside at the Fresh Start facility and receive group and individual counseling focused on short- and long-term recovery. Finally, during Phase 3, mothers are transitioning to independent living and continue to receive home visits or telehealth services from their family coach until they have been in the RPG program for 18 months.

Members of the comparison group will be drawn from VOAHOIN's other Fresh Start residential treatment programs in Winchester, Evansville, or Columbus. Mothers in the comparison group must meet the same eligibility criteria as mothers in the program group, but their residence can be anywhere in the state. These mothers will not be assigned a family coach, nor will they receive home visits or any aftercare services from a family coach following residential treatment. The impact study includes approximately 165 families, with 115 in the program group and 50 in the comparison group. The grantee is examining impacts in the following domains: permanency, safety, child well-being, family functioning, and recovery.

Data sources include administrative data, a brief intake assessment, and information collected using standardized instruments. Frontline VOAHOIN staff are administering the brief intake assessment and all standardized instruments. For both the program and comparison group, mothers are completing the brief intake assessment while they are still in the hospital. For mothers in the program group, standardized instruments are being administered shortly after they enter residential treatment (baseline). Mothers in the program group are completing follow-up assessments every 90 days while they are in the program and when they transition between phases of the program. Standardized instruments will be administered for mothers in the comparison group who are in VOAHOIN's regular Fresh Start program. The grantee is collecting administrative data for all program and comparison group members.

PROCESS AND COLLABORATION STUDY DESIGN

In the process study, the grantee is examining the success of the project in (1) creating successful interagency collaboration between VOAHOIN, the Marion County Department of Child Services, the Marion County Juvenile Court system, and other local service providers; and (2) integrating substance abuse treatment, case management, peer support, parenting education, and child development services to help infants who are born addicted to drugs. Data sources include assessments, court case files, case management records, interviews, focus groups, program documentation, and surveys.

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

VOAHOIN is establishing and updating internal policies and procedures, updating their database and training staff to embed the project in their internal service delivery system and within COVID-19 operational constraints. Partnership agreements and relationships are being developed or updated to aim for a seamless system of treatment and care. Each document will outline the respective roles and responsibilities of Fresh Start and the partner(s) and include accountability mechanisms, data collection and evaluation agreements, and the process for communication and coordination. These systems are not only including SUD treatment and care providers, but also entities that provide assistance and support to stabilize or maintain housing, food and basic needs, education, employment, community support, primary and mental health care, court accompaniment, advocacy, and trauma-specific services.

Throughout the grant period, VOAHOIN's project director and lead evaluator are monitoring and documenting the process of planning and implementing the RPG. Staff are updating policies, forms, partnership agreements, job descriptions, manuals, and other materials that capture institutional memory. Lead staff have a succession plan to ensure smooth transitions due to attrition or emergency situations. In this manner, VOAHOIN continues to work toward maintaining program continuity when there is a change in the operational environment to ensure stability over time.

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